



Full Report to the Mississippi Legislature

A Review of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018

#627
November 27, 2018



EXHIBIT

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Recommendations

1. The Mississippi Office of the State Auditor should conduct a forensic audit of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services' revenues and expenditures for FY 2018 and FY 2019 to determine why revenue shortfalls occurred, how they can be prevented in the future, and how the accuracy of MDCPS revenue and expenditure data can be improved. In addition, the executive directors of MDCPS and the Department of Human Services should consult with Department of Finance and Administration staff to determine the best means to account accurately and completely for MDCPS revenues and expenditures since the department is independent of, though housed within, MDHS. One solution that should be considered is the establishment of a separate business area within the state's accounting system.
2. During the 2019 Regular Session, the Senate and House appropriations committees should consider adding language in the Department of Human Services appropriation bill to require the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services to submit revenue and expenditure data on a monthly basis to the Joint Legislative Budget Office and the Joint Legislative PEER Committee. Such requirement would allow those offices to monitor the department's financial position in order to inform the Legislature in a more timely manner regarding potential deficit situations.
3. In order to enhance its accountability of appropriated funds, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should estimate and identify expenditures and full-time equivalents (FTEs) by accountability program. (Refer to discussion on pages 15-17 and Appendix C on page 61 of this report for a list of possible accountability programs).
4. In FY 2019, pursuant to MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-103-129 (1972), the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should consider PEER's recommended budget programs and work with the Legislative Budget Office and the Department of Finance and Administration to determine which budget programs to add to the MDCPS budget by FY 2021.
5. With regard to caseload and outcome measure data quality and accuracy issues identified by PEER, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should develop and implement written procedures for code documentation, file retention, and data entry processes. The department should review such procedures periodically and ensure that all relevant employees are trained and demonstrate competency regarding such procedures.
6. In order to reduce both overloading and underloading of caseworkers, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should continue to redistribute caseworker positions so that they more closely match expected caseloads. In addition, MDCPS should consider assigning cases to

caseworkers in bordering counties to better distribute caseloads.

7. The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should conduct a new workload study based on current caseworkers' time and responsibilities to determine the range of time necessary for a caseworker to perform a task in accordance with best practices. MDCPS should establish new standards based on the results of this study.
8. The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should confer with the court monitor and attorneys representing the Plaintiffs in the *Olivia Y.* lawsuit to discuss replacing the percentage-compliant mandates (90% for caseworkers and 85% for caseworker supervisors) with mandates based on statistical difference from central tendency and dispersion of caseloads abiding by best practices (as established in recommendation 7).
9. In order to document the professional competency of its frontline, adoption, and licensure staff, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should maintain a current list of all licensed social workers in the agency.
10. The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should consult with the Mississippi State Personnel Board to determine the appropriate minimum qualifications for caseworker supervisor positions including "related human services degrees" approved by the court monitor and associated course work requirements. MDCPS should then recommend to the 2019 Regular Session of the Legislature an amendment to MISS. CODE ANN. Section 43-1-55 (1972) to reflect the new qualifications in view of the fact that the department states there are not enough licensed social workers to fill its caseworker supervisor positions.

Also, the State Personnel Board should conduct a salary survey for the relevant labor market for all caseworker and caseworker supervisor occupational classes utilized by the MDCPS to ensure the salary ranges are aligned to the level of duties and responsibilities assigned to positions in each occupational class. The board should then make recommendations to the 2019 Regular Session of the Legislature on the appropriate salary ranges for each caseworker and caseworker supervisor occupational class.

11. In order to determine problems within counties and regions experiencing high turnover, the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services should calculate turnover by county and/or region. The department should fully analyze the turnover information to identify factors that influence turnover and to seek appropriate solutions to reduce turnover.